

years in slavery before his daring escape by sea, he later returned and became one of the greatest figures in the history of the Celtic peoples. The man who once described himself as “the least of all the faithful” bravely made his way back to Ireland to bring Christianity to the island’s inhabitants. Through St. Patrick’s influence, the Celtic people added to their ancient history and culture a new and even richer legacy of spiritual faith and human values.

Today, the Irish heritage is as grand as the many stories and legends that have been inspired by the life of St. Patrick. That is why, on March 17th, we not only remember a beloved saint but also celebrate the many

contributions that Irish Americans have made to this country, through their unique traditions and folklore and through their many accomplishments in civic and political life. These have been evident from the earliest days of our Republic, when nine men of Irish origin joined in signing the Declaration of Independence. This is a fitting time to salute them and all who have followed them in carrying forward the hard work of freedom.

Barbara joins me in wishing all Irish Americans, actual and honorary, a very happy St. Patrick’s Day. God bless you.

GEORGE BUSH

Statement on Signing the Torture Victim Protection Act of 1991

March 12, 1992

Today I am signing into law H.R. 2092, the “Torture Victim Protection Act of 1991,” because of my strong and continuing commitment to advancing respect for and protection of human rights throughout the world. The United States must continue its vigorous efforts to bring the practice of torture and other gross abuses of human rights to an end wherever they occur.

I regret that the legislation proposed by the Administration to implement the United Nations Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment has not yet been enacted. This proposed implementing legislation would provide a tougher and more effective response to the problem, putting in place for torturers the same international “extradite or prosecute” regime we have for terrorists. The Senate gave its advice and consent to the Torture Convention on October 27, 1990, but the United States cannot proceed to become a party until the necessary implementing legislation is in place. I again call upon the Congress to take prompt action to approve the Torture Convention implementing legislation.

I note that H.R. 2092 does not help to implement the Torture Convention and does present a number of potential problems about which the Administration has ex-

pressed concern in the past. This legislation concerns acts of torture and extrajudicial killing committed overseas by foreign individuals. With rare exceptions, the victims of these acts will be foreign citizens. There is thus a danger that U.S. courts may become embroiled in difficult and sensitive disputes in other countries, and possibly ill-founded or politically motivated suits, which have nothing to do with the United States and which offer little prospect of successful recovery.

Such potential abuse of this statute undoubtedly would give rise to serious frictions in international relations and would also be a waste of our own limited and already overburdened judicial resources. As I have noted in connection with my own Civil Justice Reform Initiative, there is too much litigation at present even by Americans against Americans. The expansion of litigation by aliens against aliens is a matter that must be approached with prudence and restraint. It is to be hoped that U.S. courts will be able to avoid these dangers by sound construction of the statute and the wise application of relevant legal procedures and principles.

These potential dangers, however, do not concern the fundamental goals that this leg-

isolation seeks to advance. In this new era, in which countries throughout the world are turning to democratic institutions and the rule of law, we must maintain and strengthen our commitment to ensuring that human rights are respected everywhere. I again call upon the Congress to make a real contribution to the fight against torture by enacting the implementing legislation for the Torture Convention so that we can finally ratify that important treaty.

Finally, I must note that I am signing the bill based on my understanding that the Act does not permit suits for alleged human rights violations in the context of United States military operations abroad or law en-

forcement actions. Because the Act permits suits based only on actions "under actual or apparent authority, or color of law, of any foreign nation," I do not believe it is the Congress' intent that H.R. 2092 should apply to United States Armed Forces or law enforcement operations, which are always carried out under the authority of United States law.

GEORGE BUSH

The White House,
March 12, 1992.

Note: H.R. 2092, approved March 12, was assigned Public Law No. 102-256.

Nomination of Vicki Ann O'Meara To Be an Assistant Attorney General

March 12, 1992

The President today announced his intention to nominate Vicki Ann O'Meara, of Illinois, to be an Assistant Attorney General for Land and Natural Resources at the U.S. Department of Justice. She would succeed Richard Burleson Stewart.

Since 1988, Ms. O'Meara has served as a partner with the law firm of Jones, Day, Reavis & Pogue in Chicago, IL. Prior to this, she served as Deputy General Counsel for Litigation and Regional Operations at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

in Washington, DC, 1987-1988; and as a Special Assistant to the White House Counsel, 1986-1987.

Ms. O'Meara graduated from Cornell University (B.A., 1979); Northwestern University Law School (J.D. 1982); and George Washington University (M.A., 1987). She was born May 13, 1957, in Minneapolis, MN. Ms. O'Meara served in the U.S. Army, 1982-1986. She has one child and resides in Evanston, IL.

Statement by Press Secretary Fitzwater on the President's Telephone Conversation With Prime Minister Suleyman Demirel of Turkey

March 12, 1992

The President spoke with Prime Minister Demirel of Turkey today on the escalating crisis between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The President is concerned about the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh and calls on the parties to declare an immediate cease-fire so that they can attempt to resolve their dif-

ferences peacefully.

The involvement of the CSCE in the crisis in Nagorno-Karabakh reflects the deep concern of the international community about the violence that threatens to scar this region for generations to come. The parties must not seek to gain a tempo-